

CARTSNEWS

The Official Journal of the Carolina Token Society

ISSUE #26

May 2010

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

There are two bits of important information this time.

First, on Saturday, April 24 the spring CARTS meeting will be held from 9:00AM to 1:00PM at the Holiday Inn Express, 6320 Amp Drive, Clemmons, NC. This is on Interstate 40 just west of Winston-Salem – directions are as follows.

From East-bound I-40: Take Exit 184, turn left, cross over bridge, turn right on Amp Drive between "I Bambini" and the Mobile Station.

From West-bound I-40: Take Exit 184, turn right at the end of the ramp, turn right on Amp Drive.

And second, if your 2010 dues have not been received there is a red "X" in the box below.

If this is the case, we sincerely hope you will send in your dues promptly, for if not this is the last issue of CARTSNEWS you will receive. Hope to see you at Clemmons.

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Comments, suggestions, reactions, (maybe even) criticism, will be gratefully accepted. Let us know!

Articles, New Finds, Announcements, and Classifieds to Don Bailey only! Dues to Bob King only!

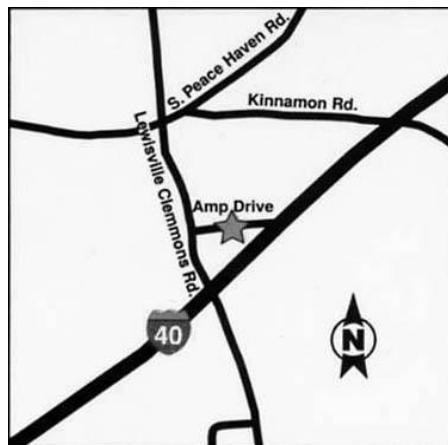
PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hello to all members of CARTS. Springtime is here again, thank goodness. This past winter seemed longer, colder, and wetter than normal in the Midlands of South Carolina, so I'm glad to see it gone. But the weather didn't seem to slow down the brisk business at recent coin shows. The Spartanburg coin show and the Columbia bottle show saw increased attendance, in my opinion.

And speaking of attendance, I am hoping that all of you can make our next CARTS meeting. It will be held on **Saturday, April 24 at Clemmons, North Carolina**. See the map below and directions in the column opposite. It will be interesting to visit a location in North Carolina to which our club has not been before.

At the upcoming meeting in Clemmons I will have more information about the November CARTS/SETS combined meeting in Georgia. I will be attending the SETS meeting on April 10 in Clanton, Alabama and we will likely finalize the plans for the combined November meeting then. I will let everyone know what is decided.

Regards, Tony Chibbaro, President, Carolina Token Society



WANTED

**ALL TOKENS AND INFORMATION REGARDING
CHAS PICK, GEO. KUEHL, GEO. KUEHL & BRO, AND
L. BOCHE.**

**ALSO LOOKING FOR PARKING TOKENS FROM ALL
STATES; TRANSIT AND CARWASH FROM
COLORADO; AS WELL AS ALL EXONUMIA FROM
BOONE, IA; AMES, IA; MADRID, IA; VISALIA, CA AND
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO.**

**John Kent
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ABUSE OF SCRIP NOTES LEADS TO 1876 LOWCOUNTRY UPRISING

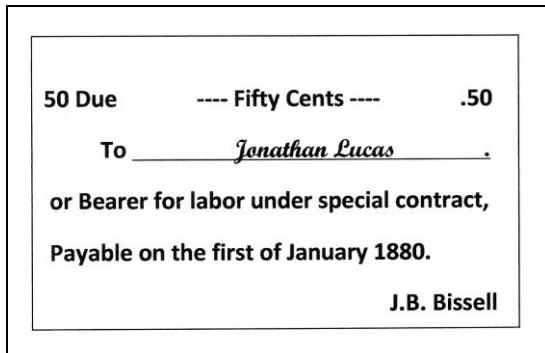
Tony Chibbaro

As collectors of exonumia, we often encounter items of historical significance. Most of the metallic pieces in our collections are commemorative in nature, struck specifically to mark the anniversary of some important historical event or the birth of some famous person. And, of course, many trade tokens are historical items in and of themselves – actual pieces of history that passed from hand to hand in the mill villages and lumber camps of days gone by. Rarely does one encounter an item which literally caused history, but such is the case with the scrip notes of J.B. Bissell. And even though none of Bissell's notes are known to exist today, they were of extreme importance to hundreds of people in 1876 and led to one of the first organized labor strikes in South Carolina history. The tale of Bissell's scrip notes is related below and is one of those stories that make collecting such relics from the past so enjoyable.

Robert Smalls stepped down from the buckboard carriage immediately upon his arrival in the isolated Lowcountry community of Bluesville. It was 4 AM on a muggy August night and although his trip from Walterboro had been made at a frantic pace, there was an even greater sense of urgency now that he had reached his destination. Directly in front of him were 300 angry black men, many holding clubs or other makeshift weapons. They were gathered in front of the store of J.B. Bissell, a wealthy rice planter who owned eight plantations and had, until recently, employed many of those in the mob. Inside the store was Captain Elliott, the leader of the local rifle club, as well as fifty of his fellow white club members. And though each one carried a Winchester rifle, they had reason to fear for their lives.

The rifle club had been summoned to the area to help carry out warrants for the arrest of several members of the mob who had been accused of assaulting two men from a nearby town. Of course, the mob had refused to give up its brethren, and a standoff had ensued. The late summer

impasse was just another incident in an ongoing labor dispute between the ex-slaves who worked in the rice fields and the wealthy planters of the Combahee River basin in Colleton County, South Carolina. The workers were demanding better wages from their employers and had banded together to strike. At issue also was the form of payment. The field hands wanted an increase in pay of \$1 per day, but also wanted to be paid in cash instead of the paper scrip they had been receiving. The scrip, they claimed, could only be redeemed at the planters' stores, and only for merchandise at inflated prices.



A crude facsimile of one of Bissell's "checks", which was the local name for the scrip, was illustrated in the September 2, 1876 issue of the Savannah Tribune. The article states that notes of 5, 10, 25, and 50 cents had been issued, but no surviving examples are known today. The reproduction above is based on the facsimile which appeared in the newspaper, as well as similar surviving scrip notes of the period. It is interesting that the redemption date of the note is 1880, a full four years from the date of issue in 1876.

The strike, which was chronicled in the *Savannah Tribune*, an African American newspaper first published in 1875, began on a small scale in the early summer of 1876. As word of the strike spread through the Lowcountry, more field hands joined in and soon several plantations were affected. It was not long before the strikers numbered over 1000. Organized demonstrations and picket lines were not useful venues for striking ex-slaves to air their grievances, but they did voice their complaints as best they could. Their protests mainly consisted of gathering together in large groups and milling about the plantations. One of the strikers even composed a song which was belted out during their gatherings, mentioning the

scrip notes, which they called "checks", and some of the planters by name. It went as follows:

We are not afraid to work,
We will labor every day,
All that we want is the greenback.
When the day's work is ended,
Come and bring the pay,
All that we want is the greenback.

Greenbacks forever,
Come, planters, come,
Up with the greenback
And down with the check
We will labor your fields
From morning 'til night
All that we want is the greenback.

C.C. Martin, don't you know
That we told you at your store
All that we want is the greenback.
Henry Fuller, don't delay,
J.B. Bissell, what you say?
All that we want is the greenback.

As the weeks went by and the strike showed no signs of ending, the planters decided to become proactive. They first attempted to force the idle workers back into the fields by intimidation, calling in the local rifle club to compel the strikers back to work. When this failed, and with mature rice in the fields starting to rot, the planters sent recruiters into nearby towns to find scabs willing to work the harvest for the usual wages. When two of these scabs were whipped and beaten by the striking workers, arrest warrants were issued and the rifle club was again called in, this time to make arrests. And that is where things stood when Robert Smalls arrived early that morning in August of 1876.



A photograph of Robert Smalls circa 1880.

Smalls was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives and a man known to everyone in the South Carolina Lowcountry, both white and black. He had first gained notoriety in 1862 as a 23 year-old slave who commandeered a Confederate steamer and spirited his family and some of his fellow slaves across Charleston harbor to the freedom promised by the warships in the Union blockade. He later served the Union Navy as a pilot, helping Yankee gunboats to navigate the innumerable streams and marshes of the Lowcountry. Meanwhile his exploits made him famous in the Northern States and he even met with President Abraham Lincoln. After the war, he returned to his native Beaufort and went into business. He was first elected to the South Carolina State Assembly in 1865 as a representative from Beaufort County, and in 1871 he was elected a State Senator. He won election to U.S. Congress in 1874 and would ultimately serve 5 terms in Washington. Smalls was also a major general in the state militia and it was in this capacity that he had been asked by the governor to quell the labor unrest that had afflicted portions of the Lowcountry.

Governor Daniel Chamberlain had wanted Smalls to call up the militia, but Smalls declined to do so. Instead, he thought that quiet diplomacy might work better than a display of force. He was cognizant of the unrest in the area and responded quickly when summoned to Bluesville. He used his diplomatic skills, as well as his popularity, to persuade the strikers to allow the wanted men to be taken into custody. After they were hauled away to the sheriff's office in Walterboro, the crowd dispersed and an uneasy peace returned to Bluesville.

Over the course of the next few weeks, the strikers were successful in getting their raise – from 50 cents a day to a dollar and a half. But there is no mention in the historical record of whether their demand of payment in greenbacks was met. And, of course, no paper scrip is known to answer the question definitively. However, there are some metal tokens in existence which prove that at least one of the planters, J.B. Bissell, continued to pay the workers in some form other than "greenbacks."



Two tokens issued by J.B. Bissell circa 1880, both brass with incuse lettering.

Pictured above are two tokens issued by Bissell, in denominations of 10 cents and 5 cents. Both are brass with incuse lettering. The 10 cents token measures 36mm in diameter, the 5 cents token is 31mm. Both show redemption dates of January 1, 1885, but as in the case of the paper note described earlier, no issue date is shown. If the same dating system was utilized with Bissell's metal tokens as was used with his paper scrip, then the tokens were most likely issued several years before 1885. The 10 cents token is known from just a single specimen. There are perhaps 6 or 7 specimens of the 5 cents denomination in collectors' hands, with 3 or 4 of them exhibiting a purplish patina from being buried in Lowcountry soil for over a century.

John Bennett Bissell was born on March 15, 1836 in Dallas County, Alabama, the son of Titus L. Bissell and Claudia Bennett Bissell. He grew up in Alabama and received his education there. Around the age of 20, young Bennett, as he was called, moved to South Carolina and became a rice planter. He later served in the Confederate Army as a first lieutenant with the Palmetto Guard. After the war he became a partner in the hardware house of Bissell Brothers, located on Meeting Street in Charleston, which at that time was the largest in the Lowcountry. After a fire destroyed the business, Bissell determined to devote his entire attention to rice planting and became one of the most successful planters in the state. At the time of the labor strike, he owned a total of 8 plantations and employed 800 workers. Some of the plantations under his control were Bonny Hall, Bonnie Doone, Ho Bonny, Vineyard, Cypress, Rose Hill, Laurel Spring, and Bluefield.



Bonnie Doone Plantation

The home at Bonnie Doone plantation still stands and is presently being used as a conference and retreat center by the Charleston Baptist Association.

Bissell married Sarah Harriet Baker of Sullivan's Island on November 17, 1858. They had a total of fourteen children, eleven of whom reached maturity. In 1882 the family resided at 23 Rutledge Avenue in Charleston, by 1892 they had moved a block north to a house at 37 Rutledge. It is doubtful that the family spent significant time at any of the plantations because all 14 births occurred in the city of Charleston. Bissell, not one to shirk his civic duties, served as alderman on the Charleston City Council for at least one term in the late 1870s. He died on May 3, 1892 at the age of 56, after an illness of five months duration.

The tokens and scrip Bissell used at his plantations were redeemable only at his stores. He owned at least 8 plantations, and while it is natural to assume that some were located on adjacent lands, it is not likely that all were within walking distance. Therefore, he likely operated more than one store. The store at Bluesville has been mentioned in the account above, and may have been located at or near Bluefield Plantation. Business directories of the time do not list a location in South Carolina by that name, however. The tokens have been cataloged in *South Carolina Tokens* under the town

of Yemassee in Beaufort County due to the town's proximity to some of Bissell's plantations, not because there is any historical information showing one of Bissell's stores there. Recent research has yielded business directory listings for J.B. Bissell as "general store and planter" at Green Pond in Colleton County in the late 1870s. This was likely the location of the post office closest to his business headquarters and main store, as most, if not all of his plantations were located in Colleton County. Therefore, catalog listings of his tokens will be relocated to Green Pond in all new editions of reference works on South Carolina tokens.

Sources:

- *A Sudden End, The Death of Ex-Alderman J. Bennett Bissell – The Model Modern Rice Planter of the Charleston Coast*, Obituary column, *Charleston News & Courier*, May 4, 1892, p. 8.
- *Organized Black Workers Helped Grow the Rice Trade* by Gerhard Spieler, *The Island Packet*, October 5, 2009.
- *The Trouble They Seen: The Story of the Reconstruction in the Words of African Americans* by Dorothy Sterling, 1994, pp. 287-290.
- *The Combahee Strike*, *The Savannah Tribune*, Vol. I, No. 40, September 2, 1876, p.1.
- *South Carolina Tokens*, by Tony Chibbaro, p. 243.
- *Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives for the Second Session of the Forty-Fourth Congress*, Washington, 1877, pp. 218-225.
- *Robert Smalls*, Wikipedia website, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Smalls

New Finds from South Carolina

Tony Chibbaro

This issue's new finds column illustrates two new tokens from two completely new token issuers. Both are from drug stores which were not known to have issued tokens previously, and both drug stores were located just a few miles south of the North Carolina state line. And both came my way on the same weekend! What a nice serendipity.



**THE PAGELAND DRUG CO. / PAGELAND / (star)
/ S. C. / (star) // (star) GOOD FOR (star) / 5¢ / IN
TRADE**

The first token arrived at my table at the recent Spartanburg coin show courtesy of CARTS member Bob King. Bob had obtained it from a North Carolina dealer a few weeks ago and had contacted me about it, so I knew it was coming. It was from The Pageland Drug Company of Pageland, S.C. and it looked as nice in person as it did in the scan Bob had sent me. Pageland is located in Chesterfield County about 5 miles south of the state line. The company was in business from 1908 through 1936. The token was probably issued around 1910 or so. It is aluminum and measures 19mm.

**ROCK HILL DRUG CO. / GOOD FOR / 5¢ / J. B.
JOHNSON // GOOD FOR / 5¢ / IN
MERCHANDISE**

The second token also came into my possession at the Spartanburg show. This one I had to work to obtain, as the dealer who bought it at the show was a little reluctant to let it go. It came across his table on Sunday morning and I had to move quickly before it got packed away into his new purchases, never to be seen again. But after a little gentle persuasion it is now ensconced in my collection. This token, as mentioned above, is also from a drug store – the Rock Hill Drug Company, and Rock Hill is, as most of you know, located in York County just south of Charlotte (about 12 miles from the state line). The token is made of aluminum and measures 25mm.

J.B. Johnson, whose name also appears on the token, is listed in business directories as a druggist as early as the mid-1880s. But the Rock Hill Drug Company does not appear until 1899, the same year that J.B. Johnson's name disappears. Reading between the lines, it can be surmised that Johnson's business was sold or renamed. The Rock Hill Drug Company's name continues in the directories until 1927, but as of 1907 it was affiliated with the J.L. Phillips Company (also an issuer of tokens). This affiliation continues through 1927, when the Rock Hill Drug Co. listing disappears. The J.L. Phillips listings run for another 20 years, however.

Curiously, a listing for the Johnson-Powe Drug Company appears between 1912 and 1916, which notes that it also is owned by the Rock Hill Drug Company. Apparently during that four year period, three different stores were owned by the Rock Hill Drug Company – the parent store, the Johnson-Powe store, and the J.L. Phillips store. Rock Hill was a thriving mill town during those years, and these three stores were probably spread out geographically, with at least two of the stores situated near the mills in a location convenient to the mill operatives.

THINGS ARE NOT ALWAYS WHAT THEY SEEM

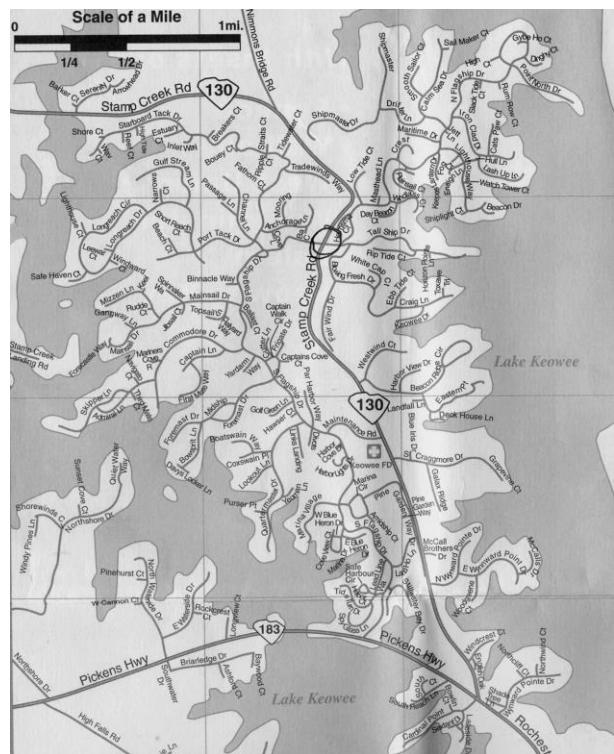
Don Bailey

The end of February I found the token shown below in a junk box. It is a very nice token, from a very small town in upstate South Carolina. And it is obviously – well you guess.



Route 2 / Keowee Key / Salem, S. C. // (Bird in flight) – R,
Br, 29mm

It is obviously a transportation token, right? I mean look at the "ROUTE 2" right there on the token. Well it is not a transportation token. A trip to Salem, and Keowee Key established the following.



Map Of Keowee Key

Keowee Key is an expansive gated community on Lake Keowee situated on the southern edge of Salem, and on both sides of state road 130. At the intersection circled on the map above there is a manned gate on the east side of the road and an

unmanned gate on west. It seems that in the late 1970's and early 1980's one could gain entrance to that portion of Keowee Key on the west side of 130 by obtaining an example of our Route 2 token from the attendant at the eastern gate and use the token to operate the western gate. (The tokens also operated two other unmanned gates at other locations.) Apparently realtors in the region also had a supply of the tokens so that they might gain entrance with prospective buyers.

But the tokens had another use in another life. Sometime in the 80's the unmanned gates were reworked so that they were operated by swipe cards and not tokens. The tokens were then used for several years – until 2002 or thereabouts – at the Keowee Key driving range. There one could deposit the token into a machine and obtain a bucket of golf balls.

So, our token's use was, sadly, rather mundane. And no one seems to know the significance of "Route 2". But the token is still attractive, and no doubt the only token carrying the name of Salem, SC.

CLASSIFIED ADS

WANTED

WANTED: SOUTH CAROLINA SECTIONS OF DUN OR BRADSTREET BUSINESS DIRECTORIES FOR THE YEARS 1897 OR 1898. Will pay \$35 for nice legible photocopies or \$75 for originals. Tony Chibbaro, PO Box 420, Prosperity, SC 29127. Phone: 803-252-1881 Email: chibbaro@mindspring.com

I WANT TOKENS FROM ANY PEANUT COMPANY – Planters, Columbian, Spanish National, what have you – from NC, VA, anywhere. Don Bailey, PO Box 1272, Etowah NC 28729, ELADON@MORRISBB.NET.

NEED HELP PLEASE: WANT TO TALK TO ANYONE WITH A SPENCER MILLS, INC TOKEN FROM SPINDALE, NC. Mine is 1/3 rotten and I need complete information from the token. Bob King, 709 Cardinal Dr, Brevard, NC 28712 tokenaddict@citcom.net 828-883-8028

CARTS Membership and Dues: Membership in CARTS is open to anyone interested in the exonomia of the two Carolinas. Annual dues are \$10.00 and should be mailed to the treasurer, Bob King. Checks should be made payable to CARTS.

CARTSNEWS: CARTSNEWS, the newsletter of CARTS, is published four times per year in February, May, August, and November.

Advertising: Each member is encouraged to submit one classified ad per issue. These ads are free to members. Free ads should be no more than 50 words in length. No ads will be run continuously; a new ad must be submitted for each issue. The editor reserves the right to edit ads for length and any ad thought not to be in the best interest of the hobby will be rejected.

Paid advertising is also solicited. The rate per issue for paid ads is as follows. One quarter page \$3.00, one half page \$6.00, and full page \$11.00. Any paid advertising, along with payment, should be sent to the editor by the fifteenth of that month before the month of issue. So, for example, advertising copy for the May issue should be received by the editor by April 15. Camera ready copy will be accepted, but the editor will also compose ads from your rough copy if you desire. As with free advertising the editor may reject any ad thought not in the best interest of CARTS or the hobby at large.